

Media, PA – Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) recognized World Alzheimer's Day 2009 by urging Congress to act on legislation that would protect Alzheimer patients from the growing epidemic of abuse, neglect and exploitation of vulnerable seniors like those suffering from Alzheimer's. The bill-- the Elder Abuse Victims Act-- would protect the 500,000 Pennsylvanians currently living with Alzheimer's-- and the estimated two million seniors who annually fall victim to elder abuse-- by instituting a national review of state and federal elder abuse programs and authorizing increased funding for elder abuse prosecution and law enforcement departments. The Elder Abuse Victims Act was introduced by Congressman Sestak in January and passed by the House in February, but has since lingered in the Senate.

"World Alzheimer's Day is an important occasion to recognize the millions of Americans suffering from this debilitating disease. However, I believe we must do more. I have been struck by the horror stories I have heard while traveling throughout the Commonwealth of seniors— many suffering from forms of dementia— who have been abused, neglected or exploited. I recall one case of a man with Alzheimer's who was beaten with a belt buckle six times by an employee at a long-term care facility. The funding authorized in the Elder Abuse Victims Act will be critical to identifying the extent of this problem and ensuring the necessary programs are created and supported to combat it."

An estimated 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, including one in eight Americans over 65 and nearly half of Americans over 85. A new Alzheimer patient is diagnosed every 71 seconds and 1 in 10 Americans have a family member living with the disease. In Pennsylvania, more than 500,000 individuals suffer from Alzheimer's and there are nearly 431,000 family caregivers.

During his time in Congress, Congressman Sestak has supported critical legislation addressing Alzheimer's. For example, he supported passage of a bill to reauthorize the Missing Alzheimer's Disease Patient Alert Program. The bill authorizes up to \$5 million per year in appropriations for Fiscal Years 2010 through 2016, an increase over the \$1 million appropriation in Fiscal Year 2008.

The Congressman also co-sponsored H.R. 1032, which provides grants to public and nonprofit private health care providers to expand treatment services for patients with Alzheimer's disease and training and support services for families and caregivers of such patients.

If passed into law, Congressman Sestak's Elder Abuse Victims Act would be the first significant act by Congress to prevent and more aggressively prosecute the abuse and exploitation of Alzheimer patients-- and other vulnerable seniors-- in nearly two decades.

"The importance of this bill relates to its emphasis on enhancing the capacities to prosecute cases of elder abuse which needs to be recognized for what it is—a crime against the person and the property of an elderly person," said Bob Blancato, National Coordinator of the non-partisan 564-member Elder Justice Coalition.

Below please find the specific provisions of Congressman Sestak Elder Abuse Victim Act:

Require the Attorney General to conduct a study evaluating state laws and practices designed to protect seniors from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Within two years following enactment, require that the study be submitted to the Committee on Aging and the Speaker/Minority Leader of the House, in which they will: 1) describe and analyze state laws and practices designed to protect seniors from elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation by evaluating state laws to ensure that cases of abuse will be reported and the reporter will not suffer retribution; 2) provide recommendations on the need for more effective laws; and, 3) recommend additions or revisions to the official definition of terms used to protect seniors from abuse and enforce laws to punish violators.

Task the Attorney General with the responsibility of establishing a plan for elder justice programs and activities throughout the country.

Elder Abuse Victims' Advocacy Grant

Propose funding entities that specialize in the needs of elder abuse victims. Health care, social and protective service providers, among others, will be eligible for the Elder Abuse Victims' Advocacy Grant.

Elder Justice Prosecutorial Department Funding

Fund the creation of the Center for the Prosecution of Elder Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation by the American Prosecutor Research Institute of the National District Attorneys Association.

Fund the creation of either elder justice prosecution positions or the creation of a position to coordinate elder justice-related cases. It will include training, technical assistance, and policy

development for state prosecutors.

Fund additional staff who will focus on elder abuse cases, an elder abuse "resource group" through the Executive Office of the United States Attorneys, nurse-investigators and other experts to assist in prosecution.

Support Law Enforcement in Elder Abuse Matters

Fund training of law enforcement officials on the important factors involved in elder abuse cases.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.